

Among many Muslims, there is confusion regarding the issue of religious intercession (shafaa'ah), it often being used as an excuse for shirk. We will clarify this issue in a question-answer format.

1. Please define intercession for me?

Intercession is the act of asking an intermediary to carry one's request in front of another person or deity. Linguistically intercession means supplication. Hence if someone says "O Prophet, intercede for me", this is a supplication (to the Prophet) and also a request for the Prophet to supplicate to Allah.

2. Do you reject the intercession of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wasallam)?

No, we affirm the intercession of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and we hope that he will intercede for us. However, we need to understand the reality of intercession. There are two types of intercession mentioned in the Quran.

3. What are the two types of intercession?

a) TYPE ONE: The Rejected intercession, as Allah mentions: **"O you who believe, spend from that which We have provided for you before there comes a Day in which there is no ransom and no friendship and no intercession"** [Baqarah: 2:254]

The intercession which is rejected is that which contains shirk. This occurs when one seeks intercession from the dead. Those who call upon the pious saints and the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) asking for their intercession, do so with the excuse that they want to gain the intercession of the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam). However, this very action automatically disqualifies them from his intercession because it is shirk.

b) TYPE TWO: The Accepted intercession: There are two conditions for intercession to be accepted.

4. What are the two conditions for intercession to be accepted?

All intercession belongs to Allah and thus should be asked from Him. Allah said: **"Say: To Allah belongs all intercession"** [Zumar 39:44]. The two conditions are as follows:

CONDITION ONE: No one can intercede with Allah unless Allah gives him permission to do so.

Allah said: **"Who can intercede with Him except after His permission?"** [Baqarah 2:255]. No one has an automatic right to intercede with Allah, or to have his intercession accepted by Allah. Allah states in the Qur'an: "And those whom they call out to besides Him do not own (the right) of intercession" [Surah al-Zukhruf: 86].

CONDITION TWO: Allah must be pleased with the one being interceded for.

Allah said: **"And they do not intercede except for the one with whom Allah is pleased"**. [Anbiyaa 21:28].

One verse which combines both of these conditions is: **"And there are many angels in the Heavens, whose intercession will be of no use whatsoever, except after Allah grants permission to whomever He wills, and is pleased"** [Surah al-Najm; 26].

So even the sinless angels cannot intercede unless Allah grants them permission to do so, and even after this, their intercession will not be accepted, unless Allah is pleased with the person being interceded for. In fact even the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa sallam) does not have independent control over intercession, rather he will only intercede for specific people, who are deserving of receiving this intercession.

5. What is the point of intercession, when Allah will decide who can intercede, and who can be interceded for?

Intercession is a means of honouring some people, by allowing them to intercede on behalf of others, and it is a means of showing mercy to others, by allowing certain people to intercede on their behalf. Therefore, when we understand that the intercession is totally dependent on Allah, we see the futility of asking it from other than Allah.

6. Allah's Messenger has been given the right of intercession on the Day of Judgement, so can I not ask him for something that Allah has given him?

No doubt the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) has been given the right of intercession by Allah, and He will intercede on behalf of his entire nation on the Day of Judgement. But at the same time Allah has prohibited us from asking the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa salaam) for it. Such a request falls under du'a, and making du'a to other than Allah is shirk. Allah states: **"Then do not call anyone besides Allah"** [Surah at-Jinn: 18].

Whenever intercession is sought from other than Him, it is an act of shirk. Allah states, **"And they worship besides Allah that which will not harm them nor benefit them, and they say: 'These are our intercessors in front of Allah'...Glorified and Exalted is He above the shirk they commit!"** [Surah Yunus: 18].

There are three noteworthy points about this verse:

- Allah states that taking intercessors between Himself and His creation is an act of worship, as the verse begins by stating, 'and they worship besides Allah.'
- This 'worship' is then explained as - seeking intercession from other objects.
- The verse concludes by stating that Allah is exalted over the shirk that they do, thus equating this intercession with shirk.

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